

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received NOV 21 1986

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Nodena Site (3MS4)

and/or common

2. Location

T11N, R10E Sec. 1  
street & number Southeast of U. S. Rte. 61, about 5 mi. east of Wilson — not for publication

city, town Wilson — vicinity of

state Arkansas code 05 county Mississippi code 093

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple

street & number

city, town — vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mississippi County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Osceola state Arkansas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Arkansas Archeological Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records University of Arkansas Museum and Survey

city, town Fayetteville state Arkansas

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Nodena Landmark consists of two Mississippian sites, Upper Nodena, situated on a low ridge near a relict meander channel of the Mississippi River and Middle Nodena, on a natural level about 5 miles east of Wilson, Arkansas. A slough or bayou to the east of the landmark contained water year-round up to 1900 but is now drained and cultivated. The environment in the vicinity of the site is typical of the Mississippi River's meander belt system. The topography consists of parallel arcuate ridges and swales representing abandoned channels of the river, some of which are partially or completely filled with water. The well-developed natural levee which occur as low ridges along these abandoned channels provide land suitable for widespread cultivation and habitation, and it is on one of these ridges that Nodena is situated. The varied vegetal cover of the area consists of bald cypress in the swampy areas and hardwoods in the loamy or sandy soils. At higher elevations, hickory, oak, blackgum, pecan, and winged elms are the common trees, while in the swales and low places, which are wet but not swampy, the vegetation consists primarily of water tupelo, sweetgum, soft elm, greenash, hackberry, cottonwood, overcup oak, and willow oak. Canebreaks are also prevalent in the area between the bald cypress swamps and the sloughs and bayous. The animals associated with the region include: white-tailed deer, raccoon, squirrel, rabbit, turkey, mallard, Canadian goose, mussel, gar, catfish, drum, and turtle.

The landmark is located on Nodena Plantation from which it derives its name. The plantation originally 5000 acres, became the property of the Hampson family in 1879 and was subsequently subdivided into three sections: Upper, Middle, and Lower Nodena. Lower Nodena was owned by Dr. James Kelly Hampson, one of the better known early amateur archeologists who expressed a strong concern with the cataloging of artifacts and the preservation of as much information as possible on various archeological sites in the Southeast, particularly Nodena. Although Dr. Hampson did not technically own the property on which the archeological sites were located, his interest and concern are largely responsible for the early descriptions archeologists have of Nodena. Many of the structures of the site were destroyed by erosion and cultivation at a very early time. Dr. Hampson's efforts ensured that important information from the site was recorded and that much of the collection was identified and kept together rather than in the hands of various local collectors. Unfortunately, many of the field notes kept by Dr. Hampson noting the provenience of artifacts have been lost.

Dr. Hampson's first descriptions of the site date from 1897 to 1900. Hampson reported that Upper Nodena consisted of 12 to 15 small mounds surrounding a larger mound. He noted traces of an artificial ditch which appeared to encircle most of the mounds. At its base, the largest mound measured about 120 feet east/west and about 111 feet north/south; it was about 15½ feet high. This mound was a rectangular truncated pyramid. The measurements of its flat top were about 40 by 60 feet, and it had a terrace 20-30 feet wide on its north side. A small mound to the north east was about 2 feet high and 75 feet in diameter, and one to the northwest measured about 12 to 18 inches in height and about 45 feet in diameter. A large flat rectangular mound, measuring at its base about 126 feet north/south and 111 feet east/west with a height of about 4 feet, was situated west and slightly south of the large mound. To the south and slightly to the west was a small mound about 93 feet in diameter and 3 feet high. A number of unmeasured small mounds were located to the southwest. Dr. Hampson also mentioned the presence of a chunky playing court measuring about 150 feet by 100 feet located to the south of the largest mound.

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Hampson has pointed out that in the ensuing years flooding and cultivation with the resultant erosion at Upper Nodena caused the destruction of most of the mounds. By 1927, the largest mound was half the size it was at the time of his first visit, and by 1951 it was further reduced to a third its height. Today, the large mounds occur merely as slight rises on the horizon, and the smaller ones are not evident at the surface.

From 1897 to 1907, Dr. Hampson dug sporadically at Nodena. He then left the area for 20 years. In 1932, after his return, he resumed his excavations and continued to work at the site until 1941, when World War II intervened. In the course of these excavations, Hampson examined 812 graves, 66 house sites, and 12 midden areas at Upper Nodena plus 452 graves at Middle Nodena. Structures were found to have been located on top of several of the mounds. Two rectangular buildings were apparently situated on the northern terrace of the largest mound, and a third was located on its top. The remains of a circular structure were discovered on the top of the mound west of the largest mound. This structure delineated by 3 concentric circles of post holes and a hardpacked burn-clay floor was the only circular building discovered at the site. It was about 60 feet in diameter and contained a fireplace in its center. Most structures at Upper Nodena were rectangular, measured from 8 by 10 feet to 14 by 30 feet, and contained clay floors, fireplaces, and pits. Two rows of post holes delineated the limits of the clay floors. The outer rows must have contained the poles which formed the framework for the wattle and daub structures while the inner posts may have supported sleeping benches around the edges of the rooms.

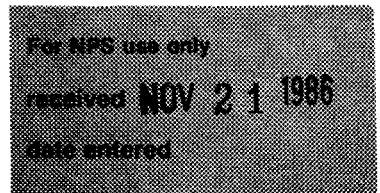
Thousands of artifacts were recovered from the excavations at Nodena: hundreds of pottery specimens, including water bottles, bowls, jars, etc., many with animal and human effigy figures; potsherds, discoidals; beads; pendants; ear ornaments; shell objects bone awls and fish hooks; axes; stone chisels; points, etc. The whole pottery vessels generally came from the graves and constitute the most well-known artifacts from Nodena.

In 1932, Dr. Hampston also obtained permission for two institutions-- the Alabama Museum of Natural History and the University of Arkansas-- to excavate at the site. The Alabama Museum of Natural History work under the direction of Dr. Walter Jones, David and James De Jarnette, and Jimmie Hayes worked on an area to the east of and in a small mound southwest of the largest mound at Upper Nodena and at Middle Nodena.

The small mound, about 25 feet in diameter, yielded over 300 of the 799 skeletons uncovered during these excavations. A 37-page table recently compiled under the direction of David de Jarnette of Moundville Museum, University of Alabama Museum of Natural History, from the burial cards of this expedition indicates the wide range of artifacts which these 1932 excavations yielded. The University of Arkansas excavation in 1932 under the direction of Prof. S. C. Dillinger, James H. Durham, and Charles Finger involved the examination of two areas at Upper Nodena, one to the southeast of the main mound and the other, about one acre in extent, to the south of the mound. These excavations at Upper Nodena yielded over 300 burials. The Arkansas archeologists also investigated Middle Nodena and unearthed 73 burials there.

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The notes and reports from these excavations along with aerial photographs of the site have been examined by Dan Morse of the Arkansas Archeological Survey, who has drawn a tentative village plan of Upper Nodena. From this information, he has located the mounds, structures, house sites, burials, excavation and unexcavated areas, chunky field and plaza, and intrusive elements (roads and houses) present in 1932 on this plan (map C). He states that the site boundary was evident on the aerial photograph and that this clear delineation indicates that the site may have been enclosed by a wall or stockade. The enclosure may have been a double wall, for Hampson found only burials and few structures near the inner edge of this feature whose presence is implied by the aerial photos. Morse pointed out that the site appears to have had a ceremonial component composed of the two largest mounds--the terraced mound labeled A with a single structure on the upper level and two structures on the terrace and the mound labeled B with a circular structure at its summit. The mound labeled C contained over 300 burials, predominantly male, and represents an as yet unexplainable phenomenon. The chunky field, whose exact location is unknown, and the plaza and the largest structures

at the site were near this ceremonial or public area while houses were situated in an orderly manner surrounding it. The arrangement of the structures in rows appears to indicate that the village was planned. The orientation of the houses is still unclear. The burials, interspersed between and under the house sites, were usually in groups of 15 or 20, and Morse (1973:-71) suggests that these represent family cemeteries. The bodies were generally extended and often contained a bottle and bowl near their heads. According to Morse's interpretation of Hampson's material, they appear to have been oriented on a north/south axis parallel to the slough which is located east of the site.

Collections of notes, photographs, artifacts, bones, etc., from these excavations are known to exist in several institutions. Dr. Hampson donated his collection to the State of Arkansas. The Henry Clay Hampson II Memorial Museum of Archeology, so named in honor of Dr. Hampson's son, in Wilson, Arkansas, houses over 40,000 items, many of which are from Nodena, found and cataloged by Dr. Hampson. Notes, artifacts, bones, and photographs from the site are also kept at the Alabama Museum of Natural History, University of Arkansas Museum, and the Arkansas Archeological Survey.

It has been estimated that over 1700 skeletons have been unearthed from the site. Unfortunately, most of the skeletal material has been lost or discarded. Only 123 skulls and a few mandibles and post-cranial bones, currently housed at the Hampson Memorial Museum, remain from Dr. Hampson's excavations in Arkansas from 1897 to 1941. Of these 123, 32 are known to have come from Upper Nodena. These skulls from the Hampson collection have been analyzed on several occasions. Prior to his death in 1971, Dr. George Neuman, a physical anthropologist at Indiana University, measured a series of selected skulls from the Nodena collection and determined that they were mainly "Muskogid" in character, presumably representing a standard southeastern Mississippi physical type. Dr. Dan Morse of the Florida State Department of Anthropology has examined the skulls of Hampson's collection and discussed the occurrence of disease

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and abnormalities (cradleboard deformation, trauma, infection, tumors). Jere Lowe, a dentist from Harrisburg, Arkansas, has studied the skulls and described the presence of dental pathology.

The artifacts from the landmark are characteristic of the Nodena phase. The pottery vessels placed with the burials are the most widely known Nodena artifacts. Neeley's Ferry Plain is the most common ware. The vessels contain a buff-colored exterior which is not well smoothed or polished. The paste is tempered with shell particles, 1 mm or more in diameter. Bell Plain, the second most frequent pottery type, is dark gray in color, has a smoothed or polished exterior, and is tempered with shell fragments less than 1mm in diameter. Painted wares, which occur rarely, consist of a red-slipped type, a red on buff type, a red and white type (Nodena Red and White), and a very rare red, white, and black polychrome type. The swastika whorl and vertical stripes are among the common painted designs. Other decorative techniques include incising, punctations, and nodes, but most of the pottery is plain. Approximately half of the vessels are bottles, a third are bowls, and one-sixth are jars. Effigy vessels represent about one-tenth of the total. Fish, duck, and hawk are forms which occur frequently while serpents, humans, turkeys, dogs, owls, bats, rabbits, and passenger pigeons are more unusual. Headpots are rare but do occur, at Nodena phase sites. Although the actual number of pottery vessels recovered from Nodena graves is unknown, the University of Arkansas and the Alabama Museum of Natural History excavations are thought to have unearthed 910 pots. When the large number of vessels in the Hampson collection is added to this number along with the unknowable numbers claimed by pot hunters, it becomes clear that the site probably yielded over 2,000 complete pots.

Aside from pottery, other artifacts characteristic of Nodena include chert chisels, diorite adzes, chert knives, celts, a variety of abraders and hammerstone, scrapers, points (the leaf-shaped type known as the Nodena point or the more common small triangular point), drills, shell beads, ear plugs, bird wing fans, deer jaw sickles, mussel shell spoons, stone hoes and spades, bone awls, dice, chunky stone, perforated and unperforated discs made from potsherd, pottery cones, elbow pipes, bone fishhooks, and stone paint palettes.

The major areas of Upper Nodena which have been excavated are in the north, northeast, and southwest portion. Pot hunters have recently destroyed portions in the southeast, along the southern boundary, and to the east of the road.

The landmark plaque is displayed at Lower Nodena. It was given to the Hampson family because of Mr. Hampson's association with the Nodena site. The owners of Upper and Middle Nodena, where the landmark is located, do not possess the plaque.

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In 1973, a field school was conducted at Upper Nodena under the direction of Dr. Morse. The excavation located archeological deposits below a buried sand blow feature. The deposits appear to be the remains of a burned granary containing burnt maize. The quality of maize being stored appears to be superior to that which is normally found in most archeological midden and refuse pit contexts.

In the same excavation, evidence was uncovered in the form of a series of buried but burned relic surfaces. One possible explanation put forward by Morse is that prior to the establishment of the Upper Nodena, the area may have been the locus of slash and burn horticultural activities.

Analysis of the data recovered from this excavation suggest that the site may not necessarily represent a specialized ceremonial center and that the process of abandonment may related to the growth of the cemetery (ca. 1500 burials).

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates A. D. 1400–1700 Builder/Architect N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Nodena landmark near Wilson, Arkansas, consists of the Upper and Middle Nodena sites and the area between. Nodena is the type site for an important late Mississippian cultural component, the Nodena Phase, which dates from about A. D. 1400 to 1700. The term Nodena also refers to a point type (Nodena point) and a type of rare painted pottery (Nodena Red and White) which have been found at the landmark.

The Nodena Site consists of a village site and burial ground. Important features of the village include several mounds--some of which had structures at their summits at the time of the site's occupation, numerous house sites and graves, a possible enclosure, a chunky court, and a plaza area. Unfortunately, the site has been cultivated for many years, and as a result, even the largest mound is only visible as a slight rise in the fields at the present time.

Excavations were conducted from 1897 to 1941 at the landmark by Dr. James K. Hampson, a well-known amateur. Unfortunately, only one map and a ledger are all that remain of Dr. Hampson's field notes. In 1932, the University of Arkansas and the Alabama Museum of Natural History also conducted excavations at Nodena.

The site has probably yielded over 2000 pottery vessels and over 1500 burials. Most of the bones have unfortunately been lost or discarded. Known materials are located in the Henry Clay Hampson II Memorial Museum in Wilson, Arkansas, in the Alabama Museum of Natural History, in the University of Arkansas Museum, and at the Arkansas Archeological Survey. An analysis of the known aspects of the site leaves many questions concerning the nature and development of the Nodena phase which will only be answered by further research at other Nodena phase sites. Although certain field notes for the site have been lost, Nodena has suffered less from vandalism than many similar Mississippian sites, and a large percentage of the artifacts remain in coherent collection that could lend themselves to further study.

The Nodena phase of Mississippian culture has primarily been described and isolated on the basis of the frequency of certain types of associated artifacts found in a limited geographic area. Those artifacts which characterize the Nodena phase have been listed in the previous section (Item No. 7) of this report. Sites belonging to the phase occur in an area paralleling the Mississippi River for about 30 miles south of and 35 miles north of Wilson, Arkansas. This area contains large Nodena phase sites of one or more mounds surrounded by clusters of smaller villages and hamlets of single or multiple dwelling units (less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre in extent).

Upper Nodena is over 15 acres in extent and probably served as some sort of social or ceremonial center for the smaller sites in the area. It has been estimated (Morse, 1973) that Upper Nodena was actually occupied for a period of only about 100 years and that at any given time, it may have had a population of between 1100 and 1650.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Morse, Dan, ed. 1973, Nodena, Arkansas Archeological Survey, Research Series, No. 4  
Phillips, Philip, 1970, Archeological Survey in the Lower Yazoo Basin, Mississippi, 1949-1955  
Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archeology & Ethnology. Harvard University, Vol. 60. Philip  
P., James Ford & James B. Griffin, 1951, Archeological Survey in the Lower Mississippi Alluvi  
Valley, 1940-1947. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archeology & Ethnology, Harvard University  
Vol. XXV.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 305

Quadrangle name Osceola

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UTM References

A 

1	6	2	3	0	0	5	0	3	9	4	4	3	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

1	6	2	3	1	5	0	0	3	9	4	2	3	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

1	6	2	3	1	4	5	0	3	9	4	1	7	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

1	6	2	3	1	1	0	0	3	9	4	1	7	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

1	6	2	2	9	7	0	0	3	9	4	3	6	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Boundary Task force, Landmark Review Project

organization National Park Service

date visited by F. Weiss 11-75

street & number 440 G St. NW

telephone (202) 343-6404

city or town Washington

state D. C. 20243

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date

3/29/88

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



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The people living at this site probably grew corn, beans, squash, gourds, sunflowers, and other plants. The large population could only be supported by intensive agriculture supplemented by hunting, gathering, and perhaps fishing. The inhabitants most probably exploited all the sources of food available to them in the floodplain environment of the Mississippi River meander belt system. Occupants of the Nodena sites traded for those natural resources which were not available in the immediate vicinity. Trade goods found on Nodena phase sites include stone from Illinois, Crowley's Ridge, and the Ozark Highlands; shell from the Gulf Coast, and salt from Missouri or central Arkansas.

It is probable the Nodena phase sites were occupied at the time of DeSoto's visit through the Southeast in 1541. Although De Soto may have seen some Nodena phase sites, it is unlikely that his expedition took him as far north as the Upper Nodena Village itself, and it is possible albeit not probable, that Pacaha of De Soto's account refers to Nodena phase sites. The decline of the Nodena culture and indeed of all Mississippian cultures may have been related to this De Soto expedition which probably contributed to the decimation of various native populations with the introduction of diseases such as smallpox and measles. Nevertheless, Phillips (1951) points out that Mississippian culture may have already begun to decline prior to contact with Europeans. The reasons for this decline are among the aspects which must be explored by further analysis of Mississippian sites.

It has been inferred from DeSoto's chronicles that the sociopolitical organization of the Nodena area at contact times was a chiefdom. Certainly some sort of political organization was necessary to construct the large mounds and villages and to impose order on the communities. The descriptions by De Soto of large pyramidal platform mounds supporting temples and overlooking large palisaded planned villages surrounded by smaller villages and farmsteads is confirmed by the archeological record at places like Upper and Middle Nodena. The presence of a social hierarchy is similarly implied by variations in the goods accompanying the burial.

This brief discussion has highlighted some of the aspects pertaining to the Nodena phase in particular. However, numerous questions remain. The relationship between the Nodena phase and the adjacent phases (Parkin, Walls, etc.) is not clearly understood. Even the relationship between the Upper Nodena and Middle Nodena Sites is unclear. The Nodena phase pattern of settlement needs additional study as does the village pattern within the Nodena sites of various sizes. The characteristics of the typical Nodena house, the dietary practices of the occupants of the Nodena sites, the physical characteristics of the people, and the nature of the stone, bone, and ceramic technologies require further consideration. Of ultimate importance are questions concerning the predecessors of the Nodena phase, the development of the phase, and the reasons for its decline. Inferences concerning the social and political organization of the culture are also of interest.

Only through additional excavations at Nodena and other similar sites will this experiment in urbanism be understood. The reasons for the rise and decline of this highly developed chiefdom, probably dependent on intensive agriculture and composed

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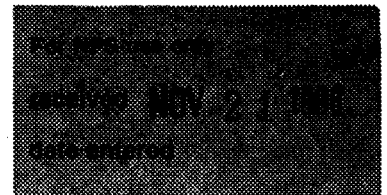
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of large villages with surrounding satellite towns and farmsteads, presents a fascinating problem for archeological research. As the type site for the Nodena phase, Nodena serves as an excellent illustration of this problem. Despite the absence of field notes, the collections are relatively intact; and some of the site remains unexcavated and may lend itself to future research. This condition is relatively rare for large Mississippian sites which have suffered from incredible vandalism throughout the years.

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Verbal Boundary Description

(See Map D) beginning at Point A the boundary runs 7000' Southeast to Point B. Straight South 1750' to Point C. West 1000' to Point D. Northwest 7250' to Point E. Northeast 2000' to Point A.

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Boundary justification.

The boundary described above includes the Upper and Middle Nodena and the area between these loci. The Nodena phase sites represent a complex settlement system composed of large palisaded villages surrounded by smaller hamlets (less than 1/4 acre). The area between Upper and Middle Nodena shows evidence of continuous occupation contemporary with the Nodena loci and is likely to represent these smaller hamlets. The Landmark boundary is drawn to capture this pattern.